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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable HARRY REID, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, eternal and unchangeable, before whom the generations rise and pass away, guide the Members of this body so that all they say and decide will be according to Your will.

Take command of their thoughts today. Provide them with words to speak that will bring unity. Give them clarity for the hard choices they face and strength for the stresses of leadership. Help them hear the cries of those in our world who struggle with pain, loss, fear, confusion, limitations, and loneliness.

Give our Senators the vision and willingness to see and do Your will. We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 29, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable MARK PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PRYOR thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate will be in a period for the transaction of morning business until 3:30 p.m. today. Senator DORGAN will be recognized for up to 45 minutes and Senator SPECTER for up to 30 minutes. We will resume H.R. 2 at 3:30 p.m. for debate only until 5:30 p.m. During this time, Senator SESSIONS will be recognized for an hour at 4 p.m. As a reminder to Members, cloture has been filed on the substitute amendment to H.R. 2, and the bill itself. Therefore, Members have until 3 p.m. today to file any additional first-degree amendments.

Currently, there are 23 amendments pending. I am told that the vast majority of these amendments, after initial review by the Parliamentarians, will be ruled not germane or arguably not germane. The cloture vote on the substitute amendment will occur prior to the conference luncheons tomorrow at 12 noon.

Mr. President, if I may say a few words in addition, today we are going to, hopefully, have a debate that will be meaningful to the American people on minimum wage. This debate will be completed tomorrow in many respects, with a cloture vote on the substitute occurring tomorrow. The other debate we may get to this week is that dealing with Iraq. Both are issues past Congresses have neglected and both are

areas where Democrats and Republicans must work together to move America forward.

MINIMUM WAGE

It has been 10 years since the minimum wage was last raised. During that period of time, the cost of food has risen 23 percent, the cost of health care almost 45 percent, the cost of housing about 30 percent, the cost of gas 135 percent, and that is as of today. Of course, as we know, in the past, it has been much more than that. Congressional pay has risen during that period of time by \$30,000 per year per Member of Congress. But the minimum wage has stayed the same, \$5.15.

Today, a full-time minimum wage worker earns \$10,700 a year, working 40 hours a week. That is \$6,000 below the Federal poverty line for a family of three. This is wrong. It doesn't speak well of our country. At its heart, this debate is about fairness.

In America, we believe—I think we should believe—a person working full time should be able to live a life that is not in poverty. A mother, a father who works hard and plays by the rules should be able to feed, clothe, and raise their children. Isn't it better that we have people who are engaged in work rather than welfare? The answer is yes.

Mr. President, \$7.25 might not seem like a lot of money in Washington, but it would mean almost \$4,500 more a year for the Nation's working poor. That is enough money for a family of 3 to buy 15 months of groceries, 19 months for their utility bills, 8 months of rent, 2 years of health care, 20 months of childcare, and even 30 months of college tuition at some schools.

Tomorrow we will have a cloture vote on the minimum wage, and I sure hope this will be a good bipartisan vote on cloture, so we can complete this legislation quickly.

Senators have had time to offer amendments. As I said Friday, when is enough enough? After 10 years, it is

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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